

# CONCORDIA University

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## John Molson School of Business

*Example of a short case:*

The CEO of a multinational corporation (the “Company”) returns to work after a week’s absence to plan and attend his mother’s funeral and as the executor of her estate, to initiate the process of settling what will be a complex estate situation. Just prior to the unexpected death of his mother, the CEO had announced disappointing third quarter results and hinted to analysts that plant closures and staff cuts were in the offing.

When he arrives back home at 10:00 PM on Sunday night, he finds the following messages, all of which will require his attention in the days ahead:

- A note from his long standing administrative assistant indicating that she may resign due to the unprofessional and inappropriate behaviour of one of the head office Vice Presidents who reports to the CEO. Human Resources have suggested that the assistant speak to the CEO before taking the matter any further;
- A message from the senior partner in a major private equity firm that has been accumulating shares in the Company, wanting to discuss third quarter results and the subsequent decline in the share price;

- A message from a major investment bank that has actively been seeking to establish a relationship with the Company suggesting that a mid-sized competitor who has also had weak third quarter results may be available for sale;
- A message from a well known shareholder activist requesting a meeting to review a proposal they plan to make at the next annual shareholders' meeting regarding excessive management compensation;
- A message from the Governor in a State that has provided considerable taxpayer support to the Company suggesting that there will be consequences if the Company closes any of the facilities in its state;
- A message from the head of the Company's major union threatening to take action to support any workers who are affected by the impending cost cutting initiatives;
- A memo from Human Resources that due to circumstances beyond its control, an annual award ceremony scheduled in a location away from head office which the CEO has always attended and whose participation is widely anticipated, has been moved up to Tuesday this week;
- A call from a brother that a major conflict appears to be brewing about their mother's estate. The lawyer involved in the estate has requested a conference call for the following morning;
- A call from a political lobbyist seeking a financial contribution to the incumbent Federal political party that has provided several major contracts to the Company;

- A call from the CEO of a critical off-shore supplier whose financial situation has deteriorated quickly and who is looking for advance payment of the accounts receivable due from the Company in order to stave off creditors and continue supplying parts to the Company. The parts the supplier provides to the Company are critical to its own production and is the sole supplier of said parts, however the Company has also been dealing with analysts concerns as to how it manages its own working capital;
- A call from the CEO of the Company's main customer (accounting for 20%+ of total revenue) requesting an urgent meeting to discuss recent quality issues with products that the Company has delivered to them that are suspected of being defective and having contributed to some major warranty claims from the customer's customers;
- A memo from the CFO advising that the Company's external auditors suspect there have been irregularities in the financial reporting of one of the Company's important overseas subsidiaries. The matter is considered serious enough to warrant an immediate investigation;
- A note from the public relations department that a senior correspondent for a major business network has requested an interview with the CEO as part of a profile they are doing on ethical behaviour in business. The PR department think this would be an excellent opportunity to get a positive message out in light of the potentially difficult times ahead;
- A notation on the family calendar that the CEO's only daughter is playing in the last game of the high school state championships tomorrow afternoon. The CEO has not been able to attend any games this year, a season where his daughter is hoping to earn a sports scholarship to a major out of state university;

- A call from a journalist of a leading business periodical asking for a comment about rumoured environmental issues in one of the Company's overseas subsidiaries which she is going to break in the next issue of the periodical which is going to press in the upcoming days;
- A memo from the Chief Legal Officer advising the CEO that he has been subpoenaed as a witness for a long-standing patent infringement case against the Company which is set to resume in court on Friday; and lastly
- A call from the Chairman of the Board of a charitable foundation of which the CEO is also on the BOD and head of the donation committee asking if all of the tickets the CEO is in charge of selling have been sold in advance of Thursday evening's annual fundraising gala (the CEO on hearing this message realizes he has only sold half of the 10 tables he is in charge of selling at \$10,000 per table);

As the CEO, how do you prioritize what you do, when and why?